



**December 2023**

**Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!**



*Katy Galewski took this photo of Al Strekow and Mary Javorek posing beside the HCHS annual Christmas window display at the Library. Katy, Mary, and Al have installed these windows since 2016.*

For the 8th year, HCHS has installed a Christmas window display in the Hales Corners Library. This year's theme is *Christmas Carvings by Bob Zeit*. Bob was one of the first members of HCHS, chief docent at the Ben Hunt Cabin, and co-author of the only book about Ben Hunt. Somehow, Bob still found time to work on his own projects. He especially enjoyed carving Santa Claus images,

and a few of his many Santas are displayed in the window for you to enjoy. Bob worked side-by-side with Ben Hunt on many projects that were featured in *Boys' Life* magazine, the main publication of the Boy Scouts of America. A number of Ben's carvings are also in the window. The display will be there until January, so please be sure to stop by to see it.

## **Holiday Fashion from the HCHS Collection**

Years of collecting sometimes result in rare discoveries as volunteers continue to catalog what we have. This pair of copper earrings turned up, designed to represent the Ben Hunt Cabin and hand-painted with Christmas trees and wreaths for the holidays. If anyone has any specific information on this fashion statement, please let us know.



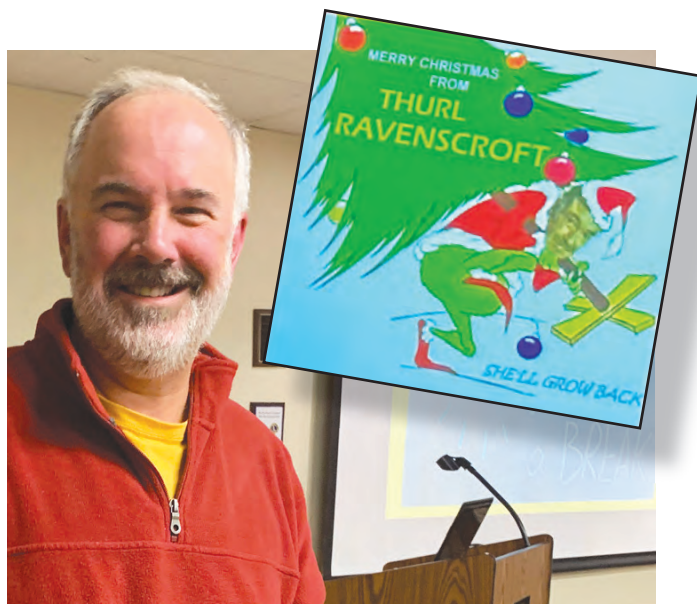
## Holiday Songs and Christmas Goodies Combine for Festive Presentation

An appreciative audience of HCHS members and friends kicked off the holiday season on November 15th at Greg Jenks' presentation, "Rarely Heard Holiday Songs." Adding to the evening's festive mood was a buffet of homemade Christmas cookies contributed by some very talented volunteer bakers. Sincere thanks go to all our cookie-makers!

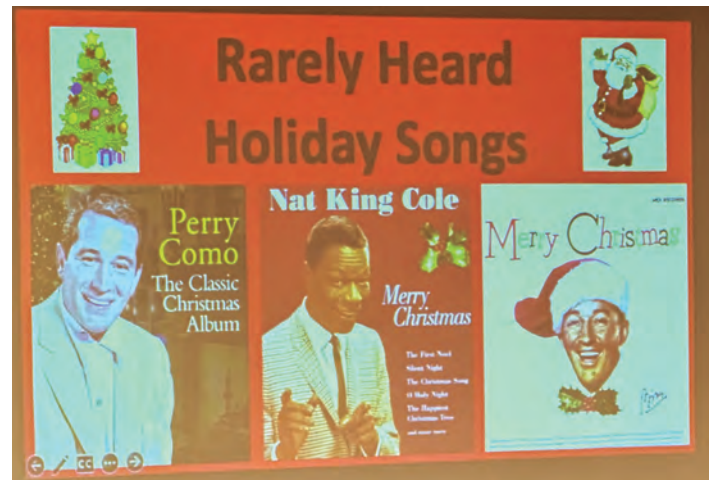
Greg began his presentation by noting that he has loved Christmas music since childhood. After he began working, he purchased one or more Christmas CDs every year, and has amassed quite a collection.

Recorded Christmas music was first introduced in the 1930s. The first "Christmas-y" record, "Winter Wonderland," was released in 1934. Later that year, Eddie Cantor sang "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" on his radio show, and it became an instant hit, selling 500,000 copies of sheet music and more than 30,000 records.

The 1940s saw Christmas music grow in popularity, spurred by the absence of family members during World War II and the presence of radios in homes across the nation. Among the notable recordings released during that decade were



**Greg Jenks and an album by Thurl Ravenscroft, the voice of the Grinch and Tony the Tiger.**



**Title slide featuring Christmas albums from singers Perry Como, Nat King Cole, and Bing Crosby**

"Winter Weather" (1941) performed by Peggy Lee and Benny Goodman's Orchestra, "I'll Be Home for Christmas" (1943) by Bing Crosby, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (1944) sung by Judy Garland in the movie *Meet Me in St. Louis*, "Little Jack Frost Get Lost" (1947) by Frankie Carle and His Orchestra, "Blue Christmas" (1948) by Doye O'Dell, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (1949) by Gene Autry, and the novelty single "I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas/ Yingle Bells" (1949) by Harry Stewart performing as "Yogi Yorgesson."

Another noteworthy Christmas-y song of the 1940s was "Baby It's Cold Outside" (1949), sung by Esther Williams and Ricardo Montalban in the movie *Neptune's Daughter*. After noting that the song has become controversial in recent years, Greg then showed a 2014 video, recorded by Idina Menzel and Michael Bublé, in which a young boy and girl perform an innocent and charming interpretation of the lyrics.

With the arrival of television in the 1950s and the proliferation of variety shows, performances of Christmas music reached nearly every home in America. In addition to traditional carols, audiences were introduced to songs such as

*(Continued on page 4)*

## TALES OF THE CORNERS - DECEMBER

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

### 90 YEARS AGO (1933)

- The Hales Corners Advancement Association and the Volunteer Fire Department invite residents to a Christmas program at the community tree. The 20-foot Christmas tree, which stands in the former miniature golf course next to Schubring's Triangle Inn, has been decorated with 80 lights.
- Cinder paths and the need for a heated waiting station on the Rapid Transit line are discussed at a meeting of the Hales Corners Advancement Association.
- George Ackerman advertises Christmas trees for 50 cents to two dollars.
- Hales Corners merchants hold a Dollar Day sale.
- Footpaths are being laid in the Blossom Heath Subdivision. The work is being done by unemployed men under the Federal Civil Works Program.

### 80 YEARS AGO (1943)

- A number of Hales Corners students on their way to Milwaukee high schools are aboard a rapid transit car which collides with another train standing on a siding near 100th Street and Oklahoma Avenue. Some of the students are treated for minor injuries and shock.
- The Lions Club begins construction of an ice skating rink on the Hales Corners School playground.
- The American Legion Auxiliary of Hales Corners is collecting games, pencils, cigarettes, scratch pads, and other items for distribution in veterans' homes and hospitals.
- The Freede-Eckel American Legion post of Hales Corners is collecting used clothing to send to occupied countries.
- The Rural Cooperative Services annual meeting will take place at Senft's Triangle Inn.

### 70 YEARS AGO (1953)

- Hales Corners Volunteer Firemen put out a blaze just in time to attend their annual Christmas party at Kelly's Hill Ballroom.
- The Hales Corners Community Christmas tree is vandalized. It was erected and decorated on the Triangle by the Hales Corners Businessmen's Association.
- The first crossing guards in the Town of Greenfield are hired by the Valley View School District to help students cross Forest Home Avenue.
- Garland Strandt, cashier of the State Bank Hales Corners, announces his retirement.
- Herbert Froemming, County Supervisor of the 23rd district for the past 12 years, announces he will run for re-election.

### 60 YEARS AGO (1963)

- State Bank Hales Corners mails out \$119,000 in checks to 1,400 Christmas Club members.
- The Altar Society of St. Mary's Catholic Church invites area Christians to join in its annual "La Posada."

### 50 YEARS AGO (1973)

- Ger'rene's Dress Shop holds its annual stag night for men to do their Christmas shopping.
- Customers are asked to vote for the most courteous, efficient, and friendly employee in Hales Corners. The contest is sponsored by the Hales Corners Chamber of Commerce.
- Due to the lack of entrants, the Junior Miss contest in Hales Corners is cancelled.

*Research by Katy Galewski*



*(Holiday Songs continued from page 2)*

“I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas” (1953) by 10-year-old Gayla Peevy, “Mele Kalikimaka” (1950) by Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters, and Sammy Cahn’s “The Christmas Blues” (1953) performed by Dean Martin. New or unusual Christmas songs continued into the 1960s, such as Allan Sherman’s “The Twelve Gifts of Christmas” (1963) and “Christmas Glow Worm” (1965) sung by Dorothy Collins and Bing Crosby.

In 1977, Bing and rock star David Bowie performed one of the most unusual Christmas duets ever, teaming up for “Little Drummer Boy” (sung by Bing) interwoven with “Peace on Earth” (sung by David). The musical arrangement was hastily completed in roughly 20 minutes, but the result was a cross-generational modern classic.

Greg concluded his presentation by noting that the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (or Chanukah) also is known for its music. One of the most



***Holiday treats enticed audience members.***

familiar songs is Adam Sandler’s “The Hanukkah Song” (1994), but Greg showed videos of two others that are not as well-known: “Swingin’ Dreidel” (2005) from the *Hanukkah Swings* jazz album by Kenny Ellis, and “Bohemian Chanukah” (2018) by the group Six13, which is a show-stopping adaptation of the song “Bohemian Rhapsody” by the group Queen. The YouTube video of “Bohemian Chanukah” is available on Google.

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## **Ghosts of Christmas Past**

The two photos below give a glimpse of Christmas decorations in the Village from years ago. The photo at left features a cutout of Santa Claus, a Christmas tree, and a wreath hanging from the ceiling. It was taken at the Holz Motors



showroom in the 1940s, so you can also see a Chevy at the right. The photo at right was taken during a birthday party at Christmas time. A Christmas tree provided the table decoration in the dining room at the Hotel Dreyfuss in 1916.



### **HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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